



POST- FESTIVAL STATEMENT

From J Rosette, Director of BANGKOK INDIEFEST 1.0
August 6-8 2553/2010 (www.bangkokfest.com)



August 14, 2553/2010

Hello BANGKOK INDIEFEST 1.0 community,
fans, press, and participating filmmakers!

Thanks again to all supporters for your
generosity in participating in the first edition of
our emerging festival. After a very intense effort
in producing and wrapping the 1st edition, there
is now a bit of time at last to reflect on the event...

Just a little over two months ago, the protest situation here in Bangkok was at a critical juncture...parts of the city were burning and a curfew was in place...automatic weapons fire crackled through parts of town. As director of the festival (Jason Rosette, aka J "J" R) I had, at one point, a bag packed with my passport inside, ready to head to a more stable environment in case the rumors of "civil war" in Thailand became reality.

No one knew how, or when, the protest situation would be resolved. Our festival, which had progressed promisingly since its call for entries in August 2009 through pre-production, lost potential sponsorships and support as key potential sponsors ceased communications and closed their offices. Several potential venues - TK Park, the Siam theater - were physically shuttered or destroyed.

There was doubt from many here that any international art, movie, or cultural event would be taking place in Bangkok for a long time.

Many other film and (pop) cultural events cancelled outright, and despite the stabilizing commercial commercial and investment situation here, a significant number of 3rd parties continued to perceive Bangkok as a troubled place.

Therefore, one of our primary goals - which we succeeded in accomplishing with a great deal of sacrifice and hard work - was to produce an attractive, fun cultural event in Bangkok that would help re-establish an image of the city and Thailand as a safe, stable, attractive place to visit and to do business.

As one of the first international film events to take place here following the protests, it's apparent that the Bangkok IndieFest has successfully 'broken the ice' or paved the way for many others to follow suit...we did this with a bare bones budget, thanks in large part to the participation of all the filmmakers and our volunteer driven efforts (including myself, as I worked a full year, part time, without salary to produce the event)

Despite concerted outreach via Thai and foreign festival associates before, during and after the event, we received no tangible support from the local Thai government, including the Tourism Authority and other agencies.

Considering the quantifiable level of international interest generated by the Bangkok IndieFest, which offset to whatever modest degree some amount of negative international press coverage sustained during the protests, it is notable that local government actors did not provide support for the effort, as the aims of the Bangkok IndieFest harmonize with their ostensible interests (i.e., to promote Thailand as attractive tourism, cultural, and investment destination).

We would encourage interested filmmakers and members of the art and media community in Bangkok and Thailand in general to encourage the Thai government and relevant local agencies to support grass-roots undertakings such as Bangkok IndieFest and other similar events in the future.

Grass-roots (or 'bottom-up') undertakings tend to be more local, accessible, affordable, sustainable, practical, and beneficial for emerging practitioners in the media sector in particular. [**versus fewer "top-down", heavily and selectively subsidized undertakings*]

With their streamlined budgets and cost-accountability, such events also tend to be less prone to corruption and other funding anomalies which may plague larger, less transparent projects. This in turn helps boost the viability of the media sector overall, especially for local media practitioners.

In other areas, the local Thai government and related agencies should be applauded for their lack of interference or monitoring (i.e., censorship) of any of the exhibited content at the Bangkok IndieFest.

While we made our own diligent efforts to program content in an appropriate way, we received absolutely no suggestions or directives to modify or cancel of any of the films slated to exhibit at the Bangkok IndieFest 1.0 from any outside or Thai government agency whatsoever.

This practical, public demonstration of tolerance for freedom of expression is notable and worth highlighting.

Finally, it should be noted that we did not experience any form of shakedown from any private or public sector actor of any kind*.

(** Not that we had a lot of cash or resources on hand to 'shake', but still, it's worth noting...*)

As our budget was extremely limited, we sought to secure low or no-cost subsidized exhibition venues as a high priority. We discovered that such venues were not readily available here in Bangkok. Most venues here are priced to accommodate the budget of significantly subsidized festival events; this exclusionary barrier does not appear to

contribute effectively to the cultivation of a sustainable, lateral, and diverse independent film industry.

Our recommendation would be for the local government in Thailand or other relevant agencies to support – via subsidy or other mechanism – affordable smaller venues or ‘microcinemas’ which are readily accessible, affordable, and most importantly transparently and democratically available to emerging filmmakers and media practitioners alike.

Private sector entrepreneurs may also consider establishing microcinema (60 seats or less) venues to address what appears to be a viable and significant niche, especially for the vital and vibrant ‘indie’ community. A cost-benefit analysis of the viability of any such venue should weigh accessibility by public transportation as an important variable, although the appropriately positioned neighborhood movie house may also be sustainable.

Our efforts to secure such an arts-friendly, subsidized (i.e., no cost) venue included diligent outreach to the Bangkok Art and Cultural Center; however, our numerous calls, emails, faxes, and personal visits following the submission of our proposal yielded no definitive, meaningful response from that organization or its staff.

In order to fill the gap in our financing, and lacking any support from the Thai government, the Tourism Authority, the Bangkok Art and Culture Center, and other local agencies, the Bangkok IndieFest sought and received a small loan and other assistance from an ASEAN neighbor, the Cambodia-based regional movie festival event, the CamboFest (www.cambofest.com)

Additionally, a very modest, but vital, grant from the US Embassy in Bangkok covered the costs of renting the HOF art venue (30,000 Baht for 3 days, with a load in and load out period included on either side), leaving remaining funds to pay our only hired staff - our venue technician Supasek, aka, "Games" - to print posters and banners, to purchase ads, and to purchase our oversized festival birthday cake, amongst other essentials.

Filmmaker entry fees* were applied towards remaining costs, though even so these costs were not completely offset. [** only foreign, non-Thai filmmakers were required to remit an entry fee with their submission to Bangkok IndieFest*]

The rest of the festival operation was sustained through the essential in-kind, non-financial support of sponsors like EPSON (projectors), Apple iStudio (Mac workstations), Singha Light (Beer), Ratchada Resort and Spa (lodging), and Location Thailand (production services).

We are, as of this writing, still seeking sponsors for post-festival activities such as: the preparation and mailing of posters and press clippings to participating filmmakers, and the creation of the festival awards for winners in each category. Please contact info@bangkokfest.com to discuss.

The 1st edition of the Bangkok Interest was, as stated, produced through primarily volunteer-driven efforts. The director of the production group, CAMERADO (www.camerado.com) took no salary whatsoever for the production of the first edition of Bangkok IndieFest, and only one part time Thai associate was retained for several months on salary* during pre-production.

*(*it's notable that this associate left the IndieFest project early for a paid position which had been gained through contacts provided by the festival itself ! ...while such staff turnover is not necessarily desirable, this is nonetheless a practical example of the capacity-building qualities made distinct via the inclusive, participatory aspects of the Bangkok IndieFes)*

We conducted photographic coverage of the event, using some of our remaining cash funds from the US Embassy grant to hire a dedicated photographer. This publicly viewable content includes behind the scenes, screenshots, and coverage of guests and filmmakers:

PHOTOS CAN BE SEEN HERE =====>

<http://bangkokindiefest2553.shutterfly.com/>

In summary, the production of the 1st BANGKOK INDIEFEST (www.bangkokfest.com) was an interesting and enlightening challenge to produce, given the distinct and real financial and political obstacles.

A significant number of international filmmakers attended the event, and a similar number of local and emerging Thai filmmakers also attended to feature their work to a diverse Thai-foreign audience.

The festival was also successful in fulfilling a key aim: to produce a 'fusion' event, with balanced representation of foreign and Thai components, versus 'foreigner-only' or 'Thai-only' undertakings that often appear by default in the local environment.

It is my personal view that a culturally diverse, inclusive program with a relevant degree of local highlights, helps sustain and grow an industry more effectively than an insular approach, especially with regard to grass-roots/bottom-up models such as the Bangkok IndieFest.

In other words: it's better to be 'Wiki' than it is to be 'Clique-y'...

Future editions of the Bangkok IndieFest, however, might best be executed with appropriate levels of support from the local government to ensure adequate outreach, staff salaries, hospitality, and primary production mechanism such as subtitles, program materials, etc.

Thanks again to all the supporters, sponsors, volunteers, and participating filmmakers who made the 1st edition of the Bangkok IndieFest a success!

All the Best,

Jason 'Camerado' Rosette
Founder and Director, BANGKOK INDIEFEST

<http://www.bangkokfest.com>

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